

Reducing Unsolicited Mail at Your Business

In 1999 the U.S. generated 5,560,000 tons of third class mail (the primary class for unsolicited mail)—of this total, 4,330,000 tons (78 percent) were disposed.¹ That represents not only a lot of wasted paper, but also a lot of wasted time handling all that paper. Want to know how you can save both time and natural resources by reducing the amount of unwanted mail at your business? Read on...

Unsolicited mail—often referred to as “junk mail”—is prevalent not only at home but also in the workplace. While it might be a simple annoyance at home, unsolicited mail in the workplace is a profit drain because of the time required to sort through the mail to see what is actually “junk” and what is not. Following are several steps you can take to reduce the amount of unsolicited mail sent to your business.

Remove Your Business from Two Major Mailing List Databases

1. Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) maintains the largest company database worldwide, collecting information on more than 70 million business establishments from 217 countries. Up to 1,500 data items are collected on each business. Businesses can either use D&B’s database services to develop their own direct-mail lists or purchase lists directly from D&B.

A business may have its information removed from business marketing lists published by D&B. An authorized representative of the business can request the “delisting” process orally or in writing, resulting in its removal from marketing directories, publications and/or mailing lists. To have your business delisted, call D&B’s customer service center at 1-800-333-0505 or send an e-mail to custserv@dnb.com.

For more information, see Dun & Bradstreet's privacy policy Web site at www.dnb.com/home/privacy_policy/offline_policy/0,2279,0-223-1012-0-,00.html.

2. InfoUSA maintains information on more than 12 million businesses in the U.S. To remove your business from their lists, fax a letter to (402)-331-0176. The letter should say on the top: “Attention—Business Update Department.” The letter should include the complete business name, address, and phone number; the name and title of the person requesting the deletion; and that person's signature. You can also send this letter by regular mail to: Info USA, P.O. Box 27347, Omaha, NE, 68127.

Remove Your Business from Specific Company Mailing Lists

Not every company uses the mailing list databases maintained by Dun & Bradstreet and InfoUSA. There are two basic ways to remove your business from specific company mailing lists.

1. Collective—Designate a person in your business to contact individual, persistent mail solicitors. (The person who handles your mail would be a logical choice.) Have each person in your business redirect all unwanted mail to that person. The designated “junk mail watchdog” can then compile a list of the individuals receiving

¹ US Environmental Protection Agency; *Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: 1999 Final Report*.

unsolicited mail from specific companies and contact the most persistent companies to request that they remove the individual names from their mailing lists.

2. Individual—Encourage all your employees to contact persistent direct marketers and request they be removed from their mailing lists. It is most effective if the highest level of management possible encourages the employees to take action.

A preprinted postcard makes it easier for individual employees to request mailing list deletions and thus increases the likelihood that they will contact direct marketers. Attached to this fact sheet is a page of four mailing list deletion request forms that you can photocopy onto cardstock and cut into four postcards.

What if a Company Continues to Send Unwanted Mail to My Business?

Often times, it takes a few months before your request to have a company remove your business from their mailing list becomes effective. This is because some companies have promotional literature printed up and addressed well in advance of their actual mailing. Allowing for a reasonable delay, if you have asked a specific company at least twice to remove your business from its mailing list but it continues to send you unwanted mail, you can report the persistent offender to the National Waste Prevention Coalition's "Business Junk Mail Complaint Bureau." If the bureau receives several complaints about a particular company, it will notify that company. Contact:

Tom Watson, Coordinator
National Waste Prevention Coalition
c/o King County Solid Waste Division
201 South Jackson St., #701
Seattle, Washington, 98104-3855
Phone: (206) 296-4481
tom.watson@metrokc.gov.

Remove *Former* Employees From Mailing Lists for Your Business

Red Flag Services, a company in Danville, California, provides a free service for businesses that removes the names of former employees from direct-marketer mailing lists. Businesses simply provide Red Flag with a list of the names and work addresses of former employees—in either electronic or hard-copy format—and Red Flag will remove the names identified on that list from the mailing lists provided to them by direct marketers that subscribe to their service. Red Flag does not ask for sensitive information about former employees, and does not provide the names of any former employees to direct marketers.

For information about Red Flag's former employee mailing list deletion service, see their Web site at www.redflagservices.com/employer/employer.html, or call them at (925) 968-1375.

Keep Your Business From Being Added to Mailing Lists in the First Place

Preventing your business from being added to mailing lists in the first place is the best idea. This will reduce the amount of unwanted mail to you have to deal with and eliminate the hassle of removing your business from mailing lists. Following are some suggestions on how to keep off mailing lists:

- Place some standard language on purchase orders, such as, "In the interests of reducing waste, please do not share this name or address with other mailers, through mail list sales or trades."
- Include a message such as "Please do not share this name or address with other companies" on registration forms for conferences, events, trainings, etc., and on subscription order forms.

- Ask your receptionist to screen callers who ask for your company's address, zip code, name of the senior buyer, etc. Some callers may have a good reason for seeking such information, but many just want to add your business to a mailing list. Tell them no thanks!

Other Resources to Help Reduce Unsolicited Business Mail

The National Waste Prevention Coalition—hosted by the Washington's King County Solid Waste Division—maintains a "Business Junk Mail Reduction Project" on their Web site—the address is <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/nwpc/bizjunkmail.htm>. This is an excellent resource, and in fact is the source of much of the information in this fact sheet. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can contact Tom Watson, the coalition and project coordinator, at (206) 296-4481.

Does the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service Work for Businesses?

No. The Direct Marketing Association (DMA), the major trade organization for the direct marketing industry, operates a mail preference service for people who do not want direct mail (advertising mail) sent to their households. However, the DMA does not offer this service for businesses or other offices.

According to the DMA, "business-to-business" mail and consumer mail are very different. Companies that market to consumers usually don't market to businesses and vice versa. To combine both types of mail in one mail preference service would make the service unsatisfactory for both types of mailers, the DMA says.

For information about reducing the amount of unwanted mail sent to your home, see the DMA's Web site at www.the-dma.org/consumers/offmailinglist.html#how.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.

TAPE ADDRESS HERE

☐ PLEASE KEEP SENDING MAILING, BUT CHANGE INFO TO:

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

☐ DELETE ADDRESS:

☐ Info not ☐ Person no ☐ Person ☐ Address ☐ Other
wanted longer here unknown insufficient

☐ DO **NOT** PLACE MY ADDRESS ON ANY MAILING LISTS.

TAPE ADDRESS HERE

☐ PLEASE KEEP SENDING MAILING, BUT CHANGE INFO TO:

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

☐ DELETE ADDRESS:

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